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ABSTRACT

Effects of the Stamp Act in the Colony of Georgia in 1765 are explored. The pamphlet is one in a series of materials about the American Revolution in Georgia. Designed for junior and senior high school students, it can be used as supplementary reading or a short unit. A teacher's guide is included. The Stamp Act was levied by Britain to force the colonies to help pay for Britain's losses in the French and Indian War. It required that almost everything formally written or printed in the colonies appear on specially stamped paper shipped from London. Colonists immediately petitioned for repeal, arguing that only colonial legislatures, not Parliament, could tax the colonies. They demanded no taxation without representation in the House of Commons in London. As Britain refused, the colonies began boycotts of British goods and violent demonstrations. In Georgia, protest was not as strong because the colony was young, poor, and fairly respectful of the King. Also, Georgia Governor James Wright was well liked and trusted. However, he enforced the Stamp Act and thereby prompted small violent clashes. Wright was the only colonial governor who managed to sell some stamps before colonialists' protests became more forceful. After moving the supply of stamps several times to prevent their destruction, Wright learned that Britain had repealed the Act. However, it had prompted a split in political thinking which paved the way for the Revolution. The teacher's guide suggests behavioral objectives and activities based on the text. (Author/AV)

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The Stamp Act in Georgia 1765·1766

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Editors' Note:

One of the early concerns of the Georgia Commission for the National Bicentennial Celebration was the lack of material on Revolutionary Georgia available for use in the state's public schools during the bicentennial years. As a result, one of the first projects of the Commission was the preparation of a series of pamphlets on the American Revolution in Georgia aimed specifically at public school use. With the cooperation of the Georgia Department of Education, this project has become a reality. Thirteen pamphlets are scheduled to be published between 1974 and 1978.

Our purpose in publishing these pamphlets is to present a clear, concise picture of Georgia's history during these important days. We hope that our efforts will encourage students' interest and add to their knowledge of Georgia's activities during the American Revolution.

Kenneth Coleman
Milton Ready

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After nearly a decade of fighting, the Great War for the Empire finally drew to a close in 1763. Peace was negotiated in Paris. This was one of a series of wars fought between England and France in the eighteenth century. Though perhaps not as familiar to American students as the American Revolution or the Civil War, it was, nevertheless, one of the most important wars of the modern era. Known as the Seven Years War in Europe since it lasted seven years there (1756-1763), it was actually a world war fought between two great powers and their allies. Battles were fought in Europe, North America, Africa, India and on the oceans. The war is particularly important to Americans because it drove the French out of North America and the Spanish out of Florida. It made the British masters of an enormous empire stretching from the Mississippi River to the Atlantic Ocean and from the Caribbean to Canada. That is why modern historians now call this war the Great War for the Empire.

It was indeed a great war for an empire, and by winning it the British had seemingly become the world's foremost power. Now it truly could be said that the sun never set on the British Empire, for Britain had colonies in all parts of the world. Not only was the British Empire the largest and richest in the world, but the British navy was considered the best. Britain was so powerful at this time that she was almost a "superpower" like the United States and the Soviet Union today. With her chief rivals defeated, Britain looked ahead to a future bright with promise.

In America this war is known as the French and Indian War. It was the fourth war fought between the French and the British in America. The three previous wars had been indecisive, but this time the British completely routed the French and their Spanish allies. The British colonists had done their share of the fighting under young George Washington of Virginia, and they were delighted that their hated Catholic enemies had finally been driven out of the eastern half of North America. With their

enemies removed, the British colonists would no longer be constantly threatened with war. Now that no foreign powers were nearby, they expected years of peace. They looked forward to the prospect of settling additional lands in Florida and in the rich valleys west of the Appalachian Mountains. With peace and prosperity at hand, the British colonists in America also looked forward to a bright future. They seemed quite contented with being part of a vast empire governed by a King and Parliament 3,000 miles away. If any thoughts of independence existed, they were seldom expressed by the colonists at this time.

Surprisingly, this happy scene did not last. Indeed, it had vanished less than a year after the Peace of Paris was signed as countless Americans began to question the judgment and power of the King and his ministers. Before two years had passed, Americans were insisting that Parliament could not tax them, and they were proving it by refusing to pay British taxes. Twelve years after the Great War for the Empire ended, the colonists were at war with Britain. And on July 4, 1776 they declared their independence.

The Stamp Act crisis of 1765-66 was a critical period in British-American relations. Basic issues were raised, and statesmen on both sides of the Atlantic had to grapple with them. The crisis did not result in war, but it was an underlying cause of the Revolution which came a decade later. The crisis affected people so strongly that it can safely be said that neither England nor the colonies was quite the same afterward. Ironically, neither side desired a dispute at this time. Men of good will in America and in England tried desperately to prevent it. But the Great War for the Empire set forces in motion, which neither side fully understood at the time, that produced friction between the colonies and the mother country.

Money, or the lack of it, often causes political problems. It was certainly the root of the trouble that began after the Great War for the Empire. Though Britain had won the war, she had done so at a considerable sacrifice. Her treasury had been strained to the breaking point. Despite increased taxation, the national debt had doubled during the war, rising to the staggering sum of £140 million. By contrast, the American colonists had fewer taxes and a modest debt of approximately £1 million. Within a few years, the Americans hoped to be completely free of debt, but there was no way the British could eliminate their debt in so short a time. In addition, several thousand British troops were still stationed in America. If they remained there, they would be yet another expense for the already overburdened British treasury.

The man who had to deal with these troublesome political and economic issues was George Grenville, the British prime minister. Grenville was never a popular leader. He was very serious, tactless and had no sense of humor. King George III never liked the middle-aged Grenville because he had an annoying habit of lecturing the young king on how he ought to rule. But Grenville had some strong points, too. He had a keen mind, wide experience in government and was completely dedicated to his job.

After careful study, Grenville decided that the Americans were capable of paying higher taxes. Indeed, he concluded that it was their patriotic duty to contribute more taxes. He reasoned that since the Americans had benefitted from the costly war against the French, they ought to be willing to sacrifice for the good of the empire. Grenville decided that £100,000 a year in new taxes was a reasonable amount for the colonists to pay. That sum, he pointed out, would not even cover all of the British expenses in America. It would pay only one third of the costs of maintaining the British troops there.

To raise this money, Grenville proposed, first of all, that the existing laws be enforced more rigidly. He had learned that some of the laws were not bringing in any revenue because the Americans were smuggling goods into the colonies to avoid paying the duties. Though this practice had gone on for many years, Grenville was determined to put an end to it. In addition, he proposed new taxes. The first one was the Sugar Act of 1764. It was a complicated law which was intended to bring in some revenue by revising the existing trade regulations. It placed new taxes on coffee, pimiento, indigo and sugar, and it reduced the tax on molasses which had been on the books for 30 years but had not previously been enforced.

Grenville also indicated that a stamp tax would be passed the next year unless the colonists suggested a tax they liked better. Through their colonial agents in London several colonies complained about the proposed stamp tax, but they could not agree on any other tax. Grenville, therefore, went ahead with the Stamp Act, which was passed by Parliament on February 15, 1765 and signed by King George III on March 22. It was scheduled to take effect on November 1, 1765. After that date, almost everything formally written or printed in the colonies must appear on specially stamped paper shipped from London. The colonists would have to pay a fee ranging from a halfpenny to £10 on all legal papers, newspapers, advertisements, pamphlets and insurance policies. Practically every-

one in the colonies would be affected by the law. No one could legally marry, die, give birth, bequeath property, buy, sell or lend money without the tax being paid.

In sponsoring the Sugar Act and the Stamp Act, Grenville was not deliberately seeking trouble with the colonies, nor was he attempting to punish them. On the contrary, he was trying to solve a difficult economic problem like a statesman. Realizing that no one enjoys paying higher taxes, Grenville anticipated some opposition to the laws, but he was not prepared for the defiant colonial reaction that greeted his efforts.

When news of the laws reached America, a storm of protest erupted. Few Americans were objective enough to understand Grenville's predicament or to appreciate his motives. Instead, they viewed the laws as an unnecessary burden which they could ill afford to pay. One reason why the colonists were so upset was that they had never been forced to pay direct taxes like the stamp tax. For years the British government had let the colonies develop as they pleased. Few restrictions had been placed on them. It was generally agreed that Parliament had the power to pass laws for the whole Empire. But in all the years the colonies had existed, Parliament had never placed a direct tax on them. As a result, the colonists assumed that Parliament did not have this right. They argued that Parliament could regulate trade for the Empire, but that it could not tax the colonies. Only colonial legislatures could do this, they insisted. Both the Sugar Act and the Stamp Act were designed to raise money in the colonies. Thus, they were a new type of tax, and they were bitterly resented by the colonists.

From north and south came spokesman demanding their repeal. On October 18, 1764 the New York legislature sent a respectful petition to Parliament arguing that Parliament had every right to regulate trade, but under no circumstances could it tax the colonies. Only the local colonial legislatures could tax the colonies, said the New York legislature. A few hundred miles to the south, similar sentiments were expressed in a more emphatic manner by the Virginia legislature. Influenced by the speeches of Patrick Henry, a fiery backwoods lawyer, the Virginia legislature passed a series of resolutions in May of 1765. They stated that the legislature of Virginia had the exclusive power to lay taxes upon the people of Virginia, and any attempt by Parliament to tax Virginians would tend to "destroy British as well as American freedom." The outspoken resistance of Virginia was a signal for other colonies to act. Massachusetts called for a general meeting of all the colonies for October of 1765. Nine colonies responded by sending delegates to New York City where they discussed their common grievances. Led by such able statesmen as John Dickinson of Pennsylvania and Daniel Dulany of Maryland, this Stamp Act Congress passed a series of 13 resolutions asking Parliament to repeal the Stamp Act.

In petitioning for repeal, the colonists were protesting in a moderate, constitutional manner. They were exercising a time-honored right of Englishmen. Another legitimate form of protest was the pamphlet, and numerous pamphlets were published on both sides of the Atlantic. Both Dickinson and Dulany published popular pamphlets setting forth the American position in this constitutional dispute. Expanding the argument that only colonial legislatures could tax the colonies, the American pamphleteers insisted that the colonists contributed to the British Empire with their trade and, furthermore, that they could not afford to pay more taxes.

In addition, the American pamphleteers presented another idea which startled the British. They argued that if the colonists were going to be taxed by Parliament then they ought to be represented in the House of Commons in London. The British disagreed. In fact, they thought the idea was absurd. British writers such as Thomas Whately and William Knox argued that even though the American colonies sent no representatives to the House of Commons, they were virtually represented by the mem-

Courtesy, Maryland Historical Society, Stamp Act, p.1

Anno Quinto GEORGII III. Regis.

An ACT *for granting and applying certain Stamp Duties, and other Duties, in the* British *Colonies and Plantations in* America, *towards further defraying the Expences of defending, protecting, and securing the same; and for amending such Parts of the several Acts of Parliament relating to the Trade and Revenues of the said Colonies and Plantations, as direct the Manner of determining and recovering the Penalties and Forfeitures therein mentioned.*

Preamble.

WHEREAS by an Act made in the laſt Seſſion of Parliament, ſeveral Duties were granted, continued, and appropriated, towards defraying the Expences of defending, protecting, and ſecuring, the *Britiſh* Colonies and Plantations in *America*: And whereas it is juſt and neceſſary, that Proviſion be made for raiſing a further Revenue within Your Majeſty's Dominions in *America*, towards defraying the ſaid Expences: We, Your Majeſty's moſt dutiful and loyal Subjects, the Commons of *Great Britain* in Parliament aſſembled, have therefore reſolved to give and grant unto Your Majeſty the ſeveral Rates and Duties herein after mentioned; and do moſt humbly beſeech Your Majeſty, that it may be enacted, and be it enacted by the King's Moſt Excellent Majeſty, by and with the Advice and Conſent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this preſent Parliament aſſembled, and by the Authority of the ſame, That from and after the Firſt Day of *November*, One thouſand ſeven hundred and ſixty-five, there ſhall be raiſed, levied, collected, and paid unto His Majeſty, His Heirs, and Succeſſors, throughout the Colonies and Plantations in *America*, which now are, or hereafter may be, under the Dominion of His Majeſty, His Heirs and Succeſſors,

The following Stamp Duties to take place from and after 1 Nov. 1765 viz.

For every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment, or Sheet or Piece of Paper, on which ſhall be ingroſſed, written, or printed, any Declaration, Plea, Replication, Rejoinder, Demurrer, or other Pleading, or any Copy thereof, in any Court of Law within the *Britiſh* Colonies and Plantations in *America*, a Stamp Duty of Three Pence.

On all Declarations, Pleas, &c. in Courts of Law, 3d. per Sheet.

For every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment, or Sheet or Piece of Paper, on which ſhall be ingroſſed, written, or printed, any Special Bail and Appearance upon ſuch Bail in any ſuch Court, a Stamp Duty of Two Shillings.

Special Bail and Appearance, 2s. per Sheet.

For every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment, or Sheet or Piece of Paper, on which ſhall be ingroſſed, written, or printed, any Petition, Bill, Anſwer, Claim, Plea, Replication, Rejoinder, Demurrer, or other Pleading in any Court of Chancery or Equity within the ſaid Colonies and Plantations, a Stamp Duty of One Shilling and Six Pence.

Petitions, Bills, &c. in Courts of Chancery or Equity, 1s. 6d. per Sheet.

For every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment, or Sheet or Piece of Paper, on which ſhall be ingroſſed, written, or printed, any Copy of any Petition, Bill, Anſwer, Claim, Plea, Replication, Rejoinder, Demurrer, or other Pleading in any ſuch Court, a Stamp Duty of Three Pence.

Copies of Petitions, Bills, &c. 3d. per Sheet.

For every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment, or Sheet or Piece of Paper, on which ſhall be ingroſſed, written, or printed, any Monition, Libel, Anſwer, Allegation, Inventory, or Renunciation in Eccleſiaſtical Matters in any Court of Probate, Court of the Ordinary, or other Court exerciſing Eccleſiaſtical Juriſdiction within the ſaid Colonies and Plantations, a Stamp Duty of One Shilling.

Monitions, Libels, &c. in Courts exerciſing Eccleſiaſtical Juriſdiction, 1s. per Sheet.

For every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment, or Sheet or Piece of Paper, on which ſhall be ingroſſed, written, or printed, any Copy of any Will (other than the Probate thereof) Monition, Libel, Anſwer, Allegation, Inventory, or Renunciation in Eccleſiaſtical Matters in any ſuch Court, a Stamp Duty of Six Pence.

Copies of Wills, Monitions, &c. 6d. per Sheet.

For every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment, or Sheet or Piece of Paper, on which ſhall be ingroſſed, written, or printed, any Donation, Preſentation, Collation, or Inſtitution of or to any Benefice, or any Writ or Inſtrument for the

Donations, Preſentations, &c. 2l. per Sheet.

bers of that distinguished body who were responsive to the needs of the whole British Empire, not just the particular concerns of the people in Britain who elected them. They also pointed out that colonial representation was impractical in view of the great distances involved and the poor communications of the day. Furthermore, continued Knox and Whately, since Parliament was all-powerful in controlling the Empire, it had the authority to tax the colonies, with or without colonial representatives in London. The British arguments were effectively presented, but they did not stop the Americans from demanding "no taxation without representation."

While the battle of words kept the printers busy, some colonists resorted to more drastic measures. A movement to boycott British produ began in Connecticut and spread throughout the colonies. Communities agreed not to purchase British goods. Instead, they decided that they could make some of the products themselves and that they could do without non-essential items. This type of resistance proved to be more effective than pamphlets or petitions in bringing about the repeal of the taxes. The tactic of economic boycott is still used in the twentieth century. It was one of the tools used by civil rights leaders in bringing about changes in society nearly 200 years after the Stamp Act.

The radicals or extremists in the colonies were called the "Sons of Liberty." Active in every colony, they were willing to use violence to get their way. The leaders were usually respectable middle class or upper class citizens, but many poor people were active in their organizations too. These "militants" incited mobs, threatened British officials, led public demonstrations, destroyed public and private property and generally made life miserable for British officials in the colonies.

The most radical colony seemed to be Massachusetts. There the Sons of Liberty, who were led by Samuel Adams, ran rampant. The authorities were unable to control them. After parading through the streets of Boston, breaking windows and burning an effigy of the stamp distributor, a mob of Liberty Boys seized the stamp distributor and demanded that he resign from his office immediately. If he refused, the mob hinted strongly that his house would be destroyed. Fearing for his life, the helpless stamp distributor gave up his post on August 14, 1765.

Following the lead of Massachusetts, the Sons of Liberty in the other colonies went into action. Using the same techniques, they thoroughly intimidated the stamp distributors. The tactics of terror succeeded magnificently. Within two weeks, the Rhode Island and New York stamp distributors had resigned. In September, the stamp distributors in New Jersey, Maryland, New Hampshire and Connecticut also gave up their commissions. Those in Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Virginia soon met the same fate. By November 1, 1765, the date the Stamp Act was scheduled to become effective, the stamp distributors had already been driven out of all the American colonies except North Carolina and Georgia. When the stamp master for North Carolina finally arrived at Wilmington on November 16, he promptly resigned. The Sons of Liberty assumed that if the Stamp distributors were driven out of all the colonies that the Stamp Act could not be enforced. Except for Georgia, their strategy had succeeded very well, and ultimately it was successful there too.

Not to be outdone by the other colonies, the Liberty Boys in Boston took to the streets again. They went on a rampage, wrecking the homes of several officials including the mansion of the lieutenant governor of the colony. Mobs in other colonies committed acts of violence, but usually they were not as destructive as the Sons of Liberty in Massachusetts. By November 1765, the Sons of Liberty had gained such a powerful position in all colonies except Georgia that it was no longer safe for those who supported the Stamp Act to speak out in public. To do so was to invite a mob of Liberty Boys for a visit.

In Georgia the situation was quite different. While the opponents of the Stamp Act in the other colonies were gaining the upper hand over the British authorities by resorting to extreme measures, the opponents of the act in Georgia were weak by comparison. There were good reasons why loyalism to Britain was stronger in Georgia than in the other colonies. Georgia was the youngest of the 13 colonies. Several colonies were more than 100 years old. Virginia, the oldest, was founded in 1607, but Georgia was not established until 1733. Because the colony was so young, many Georgians had arrived only recently. Those who had not yet lived in Georgia long enough to consider the colony their home still felt allegiance to their native land. Many of these newcomers quite naturally tended to be more understanding of British policies.

At the time of the Stamp Act crisis, the young colony of Georgia was relatively poor. Few persons of wealth had settled in the colony, and it usually took many years to clear the forest and make a province prosperous. The Georgia economy was primarily agricultural. Rice, indigo, silk, naval stores and deerskins were the main products that Georgians exported to England. Although a few Georgians owned large plantations near the coast, most Georgians were small farmers. The largest town and the center of government was Savannah, a port city whose population was not much more than a thousand. Smaller settlements existed at Darien, Augusta, Sunbury, Ebenezer and Midway, but they were little more than villages. The population of the whole colony was less than 20,000, and nearly half of that total was slaves. As a frontier colony, Georgia was still dependent upon Britain for economic and military support in the 1760's.

From the beginning, the British government had taken a special interest in Georgia. During the Trustee Period (1732-1752), Parliament granted £136,800 to Georgia. No other colony had been so richly financed by the British government. When Georgia became a royal colony, Parliament continued to provide an annual grant to help pay the costs of colonial government. In time of war, British troops and the British navy helped protect Georgia from her enemies – hostile Indians, the Spanish in Florida and the French in the west. Georgians could remember the great victory at Bloody Marsh in 1742 when James Oglethorpe, commanding a British regiment, turned back a huge Spanish invasion force and saved the colony. Thus Georgia, linked to England with strong social, economic and military ties, was reluctant to break bonds that had developed over three decades.

In addition to these background factors, the leadership of Governor James Wright set Georgia apart from the other colonies. King George III had few ministers with the ability and determination of James Wright of Georgia. Wright, a widower, had lived for many years in South Carolina. He was well-educated and had considerable experience in government when he arrived in Georgia in 1760. As the royal governor, he was the King's chief minister in the colony. It was his duty, therefore, to see that the British laws were carried out no matter how unpopular they might be with the people of the colony. It was also his duty to serve as the chief representative of the people of Georgia. As such, he was supposed to work closely with the Georgia legislature in passing laws for the colony. He was also expected to keep the British government informed about conditions in Georgia. His position was somewhat like that of a modern high school principal. The principal must carry out the policies of the board of education which appointed him, or he will lose his job. At the same time, he is expected to work with the faculty and represent the students. Sometimes the students, faculty and board have differences of opinion. In such cases, the principal is caught in the middle. It is difficult to satisfy one side without offending the other. The principal's job is not an easy one. Nor was it easy for Wright to satisfy demands from both sides of the Atlantic.

Courtesy, Robert W. Woodruff Library, 1765 map

During his first years as governor, Wright carried out his responsibilities diligently and enthusiastically. Rather aloof and aristocratic in bearing, he proved to Georgians that he was a fair man whose word could be trusted. His integrity was above reproach. An effective administrator, he enjoyed a harmonious relationship with the legislature. He made friends with several members of the upper house, including the respected and influential James Habersham. Although he had fewer close friends in the lower house, called the Commons House of Assembly, he commanded the respect of that body. Few royal governors possessed Wright's executive ability. Fewer still enjoyed such widespread colonial support when the Stamp Act crisis began. The popular support Wright gained from the people of Georgia during the years before the crisis helped to explain why the radicals were unable to mobilize much resistance to the Stamp Act in Georgia.

Wright understood American attitudes far better than did Grenville and the British ministry. He quickly realized that many Americans were not

going to pay the tax. He was deeply troubled by what might happen if enough people decided to take the law into their own hands. Reports of resistance in other colonies increased Wright's concern. Although he personally had misgivings about the Stamp Act and probably believed that it was an unwise law, he never doubted Parliament's right to pass it. There was a possibility that the law might be repealed, and Wright may well have hoped that Parliament would repeal it before conditions in America grew worse. But until Parliament acted, Wright was determined to enforce the Stamp Act.

Wright had no way of knowing if he would be able to enforce the Stamp Act in Georgia. Indeed, his chances did not look good. In view of the rising tide of colonial resistance, it would take a superhuman effort to enforce the law in Georgia. The responsibility rested squarely on Wright's shoulders. Could he succeed where 12 other governors had failed? Wright must have had doubts. The odds were overwhelmingly against him. Nevertheless, with characteristic British steadfastness, he resolved to do his duty.

One of the most important steps Wright took in countering threats to the King's authority was to stifle the ambitions of the Commons House. In August 1765, Alexander Wylly, the speaker of the Commons House, received a letter from the Massachusetts legislature inviting Georgia to send delegates to a congress in New York to protest the passage of the Stamp Act and petition for its repeal. Wylly asked Governor Wright to call the legislature into session. When Wright refused, Wylly, on his own authority, urged the representatives to assemble in Savannah. With 16 of the 25 representatives present on September 2, Wylly read the letter to them. It was soon apparent that those assembled wished to participate in the Stamp Act Congress. They could not act in an official capacity, however, without the approval of the governor, and Wright had no intention of giving in. Due to Wright's stubborn decision, Georgia was one of the four colonies that did not participate officially in the Stamp Act Congress. Wright could not prevent the assembled representatives from sending an "observer" to the Congress to watch the proceedings and bring back to Georgia a copy of the petitions adopted by the congress. Later, when the assembly was in session, it thanked Wylly for his efforts and voted approval of the petitions sent to the King and Parliament by the Stamp Act Congress.

At the same time the Commons House was confronting the governor with the Stamp Act Congress, it was also in conflict with Georgia's colonial agent, William Knox. The assembly, through its committee of correspondence, had instructed Knox to work with the other colonial agents in opposing the Stamp Act. The committee insisted that Georgia was in such a weak economic state that it simply could not afford to pay additional taxes. It was careful to instruct Knox to exercise caution and to express his objections humbly without questioning the authority of Parliament. Knox, an ambitious young politician, was familiar with conditions in Georgia, having lived in the colony for five years. He had adequately represented the colony as colonial agent since 1762, but his political views were changing. It seems that he was eager to obtain a political office in the British government, and he later was appointed under-secretary of state. By the time the Stamp Act was passed, he had become one of George Grenville's staunchest supporters. Few Georgians were aware of this shift until he published a pamphlet entitled *The Claim of the Colonies.* In it he argued that Parliament was an awesome power that had complete legislative authority over the colonies. Thus, instead of opposing the Stamp Act as the Georgia assembly had instructed him, he defended it.

Georgians learned of his betrayal when a portion of his pamphlet was published in the Savannah newspaper, the *Georgia Gazette,* on August 8, 1765. Many Georgians were furious with Knox because they, like many northern colonists, were coming to the conclusion that only the colonial legislature

which they elected had the power to tax them. They believed that Parliament had exceeded its power to regulate trade by passing the Stamp Act. Knox's views were so unpopular in Georgia that his old friend Hames Habersham wrote to him that his arguments were insulting and disagreeable to all Georgians. Knox's ill-timed pamphlet heightened tensions that were already mounting and led to his dismissal as colonial agent.

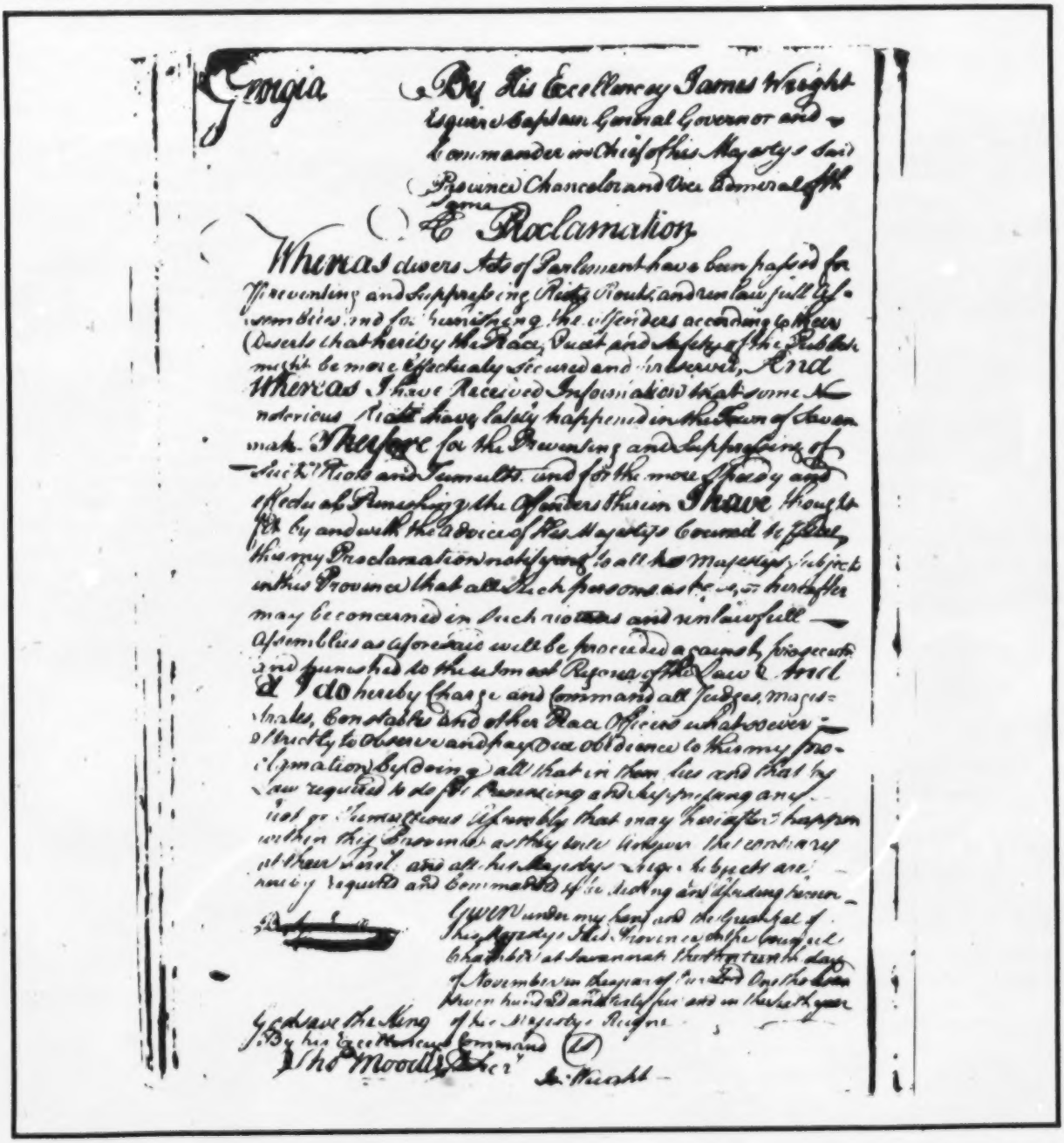
As November 1 approached, opponents of the Stamp Act grew bolder. On October 25, the anniversary of the accession of King George III, the usual ceremonies took place in Savannah. Late in the afternoon someone appeared with a dummy representing a stamp distributor. Soon a crowd formed and the effigy was paraded through the streets of town. The climax of the festivities came when the mob gleefully hanged and burned the effigy. In this symbolic burning, Georgians were following in the footsteps of the radicals in the other colonies. This demonstration was relatively mild and harmless, but it was a preview of more violent things to come.

A few days later a more serious event affected the colony when five prominent gentlemen in Savannah, including James Habersham, the secretary of Georgia and president of the governor's council, received anonymous threatening letters. The men were accused of housing the stamp paper in their warehouses and of being the stamp distributor. The accusations were false, as events later proved, but the threats caused considerable alarm. The letters demanded a public reply to the charges or "fatal consequences" would befall the recipients. Three of the accused denied any knowledge of the stamps and offered a reward of £50 to anyone who could name the author of the letters. A fourth, Denys Rolle, a member of Parliament who was visiting in Georgia, decided to return to England immediately. And the fifth, Habersham, ignored the threat though he thought for a time that he might have to leave Savannah for his own safety. In response to this threat of violence, Governor Wright issued a proclamation against riots and unlawful assemblies. He also offered a reward of £50 to anyone who could identify the unknown author of the threatening letters who called himself "the Townsman." Despite these efforts, there is no evidence to indicate that the identity of the Townsman was ever discovered.

With the radicals growing stronger and more open in their opposition to the Stamp Act, Governor Wright found himself in a terrible dilemma. He was determined to enforce the law, but the British government had not given him the means to do so. The Stamp Act was scheduled to go into effect on November 1, but on that date no stamped paper or stamp distributor had yet arrived in Georgia. The colony had not even received a copy of the Stamp Act itself. Without these vital commodities, Wright could not possibly enforce the law. Expecting conditions to get worse before they improved, there was little he could do but await future developments. Following the advice of his council, he did take one final precaution, however. He stopped issuing land grants or warrants until the stamped paper arrived. To appease the merchants, whose support he would need later, he did allow shipping to continue. When ships cleared the customs house they were given a special certificate explaining that no stamped paper was available in the colony.

Wright did not have to wait long for more trouble to appear. On November 4, the radicals met at Machenry's Tavern, a popular tavern in Savannah, where they held an organizational meeting. Having learned that the stamp master for Georgia was to be George Angus, the radicals decided unanimously that they would demand his resignation when he arrived. If Angus refused, they promised that there would be "bad consequences." Clearly, the radicals were prepared to take matters into their own hands. For the radicals to meet in a public spot shows not only that they were becoming bolder, but also that they had widespread public support and that they

Courtesy, Georgia Archives, Proclamations Book H, 1754-1794, p. 106



Georgia

By His Excellency James Wright
Esquire Captain General Governor and
Commander in Chief of this Majesty's said
Province Chancellor and Vice Admiral &c

A Proclamation

Whereas divers Acts of Parliament have been passed for
preventing and suppressing Riots Routs and unlawfull As-
semblies and for punishing the Offenders according to their
Desarts that thereby the Peace Quiet and Safety of the Subject
might be more effectualy secured and preserved, And
Whereas I have Received Information that some Al-
notorious Riots have lately happened in the Town of Savan-
nah. Therefore for the Preventing and Suppressing of
such Riots and Tumults and for the more speedy and
effectual Punishing the Offenders therein I have thought
fit by and with the Advice of His Majestys Council to issue
this my Proclamation hereby giving to all his Majestys Subjects
in this Province that all such persons as he or she hereafter
may be concerned in such riotous and unlawfull
Assemblies as aforesaid will be prosecuted against prosecuted
and punished to the utmost Rigour of the Law And
I do hereby charge and command all Judges, Magis-
trates, Constable and other Peace Officers whatsoever
strictly to observe and pay due Obedience to this my Pro-
clamation by doing all that in them lies and that by
Law required to do for Preventing and Suppressing any
such Tumultuous Assembly that may hereafter happen
within their Precincts as they tender their Duty
at their Peril and all his Majestys Liege Subjects are
hereby required and Commanded to be aiding and assisting herein

Given Under my hand and the Great Seal of
His Majestys said Province at the Council
Chamber at Savannah this Twenty seventh day
of November in the Year of our Lord One thou-
sand seven hundred and Sixty five and in the Fifth Year
of the Reign of his Majestys Reign

God save the King

By his Excellencies Command

Tho Moodly Secr

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could make threats of this type with little fear of punishment from the authorities.

The next day a group of radicals treated the people of Savannah to some unusual entertainment. A band of sailors placed one of their shipmates on a scaffold as if he were going to be hanged. He had a rope around his neck and stamps in his hand for he was supposed to represent the stamp master. The sailors had great fun carrying him all over town. Periodically, they pretended to beat him with a stick, and with each blow he would cry out, "No stamps, no riot act." After everyone in town had witnessed the demonstration, the sailors placed the scaffold in front of Machenry's Tavern and hanged the stamp master. They left him dangling there to the amusement of the crowd. Actually, their friend was not harmed because a rope went under his arms as well as around his neck. Presently, the sailors cut him down, and then they all went into Machenry to quench their thirst.

Although no one was hurt and no property was damaged during the proceedings, Wright was becoming alarmed that the public demonstrations might get completely out of hand. His fears were not relieved when a week later John Parnham, a temporary agent who was to serve until Angus arrived, yielded to threats by resigning his post in Charleston. Outraged by this mob action, Wright issued another decree against riots and tumultuous assemblies. It was no more effective than his earlier ones.

Though Wright had many confrontations with the radicals during the Stamp Act crisis, he never once identified a single one by name in his lengthy letters to the British government in London. (In this paper the term "radical" refers to those citizens who either plotted or took direct action against the British officials who attempted to enforce the Stamp Act.) Neither did articles in the local newspapers, the *Georgia Gazette* in Savannah and the *South Carolina Gazette* in Charleston. In fact, the radicals who opposed Wright are not identified in any available source, and so they must remain unknown. Wright sometimes called the radical Sons of Liberty the "Sons of Licentiousness." On many occasions he referred to them as "South Carolinians," for he was convinced that it was "outside agitators" from that neighboring colony who kept the more loyal Georgians in turmoil.

A similar problem exists in trying to identify those who backed the Governor in upholding royal authority. Historians generally assume that the older, wealthier, more aristocratic elements of society supported Wright. Rich merchants and planters would fall into this category. Wright himself owned thousands of acres of land, as did James Habersham, who was perhaps Wright's ablest ally, and William Knox, the ousted colonial agent. Though there are exceptions, it is normal for men of this position to be more conservative, to fear mobs and to back a government that has granted them power, prestige and wealth. But it is also possible that many ordinary Georgians of modest income came to Wright's support. Unfortunately, the records are not clear on this point and few of Wright's backers are identified by name. Since Wright referred to his allies as "well-disposed gentlemen," it is assumed that many of them came from the well-to-do class.

Fortunately for Wright, many Georgia citizens shared his concern about unruly mobs. When the stamps finally arrived on December 5, a delegation of respectable Savannah citizens assured the governor that the townspeople had no intention of attempting to destroy the stamps. Reassured by this support, Wright lodged the stamps in the Fort Halifax commissary in Savannah. Having received a copy of the Stamp Act, Wright was able to inform his council on December 16 that the Stamp Act was now fully in force in Georgia.

Actually the law was not yet in force. It could not be fully carried out until the stamp distributor arrived, and George Angus was still in transit. At about three o'clock in the afternoon of January 2, Captain Milledge and Captain Powell of the

Rangers (soldiers) informed Wright that a mob of nearly 200 Liberty Boys was assembling in Savannah. It appeared that they were planning to break into the commissary and seize the stamped papers. Wright ordered the officers to assemble their troops. Taking down his musket, he went outside where he faced a crowd that had formed outside his gate. Pushing his way into the middle of the crowd, Wright demanded to know why they were there. Some of the men asked if he intended to appoint a temporary stamp distributor as the merchants had requested. Wright, who believed strongly in order and dignity, was offended by their action. He told them that this was no way for the people to address their royal governor. He proceeded to lecture them at length about decorum. After assuring them that he was the real defender of liberty, despite the fact that many of them were called Sons of Liberty, he dismissed the crowd. Hurrying on to the guardhouse, Wright led the Rangers, as well as a few sailors, merchants and clerks, to the Fort Halifax commissary on the outskirts of town. With musket still in hand, Wright ordered his force to load the stamped papers on a cart and haul them back to the guardhouse. By five o'clock the stamped papers were safely stored. For the next two weeks they were protected with a heavy guard of at least 40 troops. Wright was certain that only his prompt action saved the stamps from destruction by the Liberty Boys.

The next day, January 3, George Angus arrived at Savannah. He could hardly have picked a worse time to appear. As prearranged by Wright, an escort greeted Angus and hurried him to the safety of the governor's home. There he took the necessary oaths. The stamped papers could now be distributed. Soon the port was opened and 60 ships in Savannah were cleared with the stamped paper. After these vessels departed, the port was closed again to await the King's response to petitions for repeal of the Stamp Act. The unpopular Angus stayed with Wright about two weeks and then fled to the country, ending his service as stamp distributor. Though no more stamps were sold in Georgia, Wright had achieved a great feat. In selling stamps for the ships, he had done what no other governor in a colony which rebelled had been able to do. Namely, he had enforced the Stamp Act. Wright succeeded where others failed mainly because he utilized the power that was available to him, because the opposition was weak and disorganized and because the merchants agreed to comply with the law. They did so because they made handsome profits on their trade even with the additional fee. Given the choice of paying the tax or letting their valuable cargoes rot in the harbor, they grudgingly accepted the hated tax. In doing so they earned the scorn of the other colonies which had rejected the Stamp Act completely. The same reasoning also prompted the radical Sons of Liberty to agree to this temporary breach of principle. In this instance, as in so many in history, practical considerations triumphed over principle.

Wright had little opportunity to rest on his laurels, for another crisis erupted late in January. The Liberty Boys in the Georgia backcountry, urged on by South Carolinians and northern agitators, seemed determined to put an end to the stamps in Georgia. Wright was informed that a mob of 600 Liberty Boys was gathering near Savannah and preparing to destroy the stamps. This was the most serious challenge Wright had faced. Would his small force of 150 troops scattered throughout the colony be strong enough to resist an armed mob of this size? As always, Wright was unwilling to give in to mob demands and was determined to protect the stamps at all costs. By now the stamps had become a symbol of British authority, and their symbolic value was much greater than their economic worth. To keep the stamps out of the hands of the Liberty Boys, Wright decided to move them once again. This time he had them placed in Fort George on Cockspur Island and stationed more than 50 Rangers there to protect them.

Wright had saved the stamps, but in doing so he had left the town practically defenseless. For several days the people of Savannah were filled with anxiety. With the assistance of some "well-

Courtesy, Georgia Historical Society

disposed gentlemen" Wright convinced some of the mob to go home, but he estimated that 300 still remained. Rumor had it that the mob intended to attack the governor's home and kill Governor Wright unless he cooperated. At this crucial time, the *Speedwell*, the British ship which had brought the stamps to Georgia, returned to Savannah. Fifty Rangers transported the stamps to the vessel and then hurried back to protect the town. Thus reinforced Wright was able to face the mob with nearly 100 trained men at his side. On February 4, the mob finally marched into town for a showdown. But it was too late. The Liberty Boys had missed their opportunity: Unwilling to risk an attack against Wright's forces, the Liberty Boys bickered among themselves and then began to disperse. Within three hours they were gone and the crisis was over. The withdrawal of the Liberty Boys marked the end of the threat of mob rule in Savannah. The confrontation also marked the end of the stamps in Georgia. When the *Speedwell* departed it carried the stamps out of Georgia for good.

Georgia's compliance with the Stamp Act may have pleased King George III, but it did not set

well with the radicals in America. Other colonies denounced Georgia for betraying liberty. As usual South Carolina was particularly critical of Georgia. A radical group in Charleston voted to stop all trade with Georgia. So great was its anger toward Georgia that it threatened to put to death anyone who sent provisions to Georgia. The threat was no idle boast, for several vessels bound for Georgia were seized and ransacked.

Throughout the Stamp Act controversy, Governor Wright complained repeatedly about the trouble-makers from South Carolina. He was certain that outsiders were responsible for much of the turmoil in Georgia. Indeed, he seemed to think that there would have been no trouble in Georgia if the South Carolinians and other radicals had stayed away. By resisting the law, other colonies set an example which influenced Georgia. To put it another way, if the other colonies had accepted the Stamp Act, then Georgia would have been more likely to accept it too. But the other colonies were determined to resist the act, and some of their determination rubbed off on Georgians. There was no way that Wright could prevent South Carolinians from crossing the Savannah River and entering Georgia. Nor could he stop letters which described the resistance of other colonies from reaching Georgia. What upset Wright most of all was not that the people in South Carolina resisted the act, but that William Bull, the lieutenant governor of South Carolina, had meekly given in to their demands. When Bull opened the port of Charleston, Wright was furious. Bull claimed that no stamps were available in South Carolina, but Wright did not believe him. Wright was convinced that Bull had not even tried to enforce the Stamp Act. Instead, he had handed over the reins of government to the radicals. Wright viewed Bull's leniency as a stab in the back to those governors who were sincerely trying to carry out the law. In fairness to Bull it should be pointed out that he had yielded to public pressure in much the same manner as all the royal governors except Wright had done.

With the stamps out of Georgia, the colony settled down to a period of relative quiet. The energy of the mobs had been spent. Without stamps the act could not be enforced, and so there was no reason for further resistance. Governor Wright, the ever-faithful servant of the King, took advantage of this period of calm to try to convince Georgians that resistance to the law had been a mistake. Dealing mostly with the wealthier, more aristocratic elements, Wright hoped to regain much of the popular support he had lost during the controversy. Many of these "well-disposed gentlemen," as Wright called them, were fearful of social upheaval. They agreed with the governor that there had been enough protests, threats and violence to last Georgia for a long time. There was still the possibility that violence might erupt again. As a precaution, Wright continued to request the British government to send a warship and additional troops to Georgia. In seeking broader support throughout the colony, Wright turned his attention to the legislature. Aside from the efforts of the Commons House to participate in the Stamp Act Congress and its later approval of the petition of that congress, the legislature had not played a vital role in the Stamp Act dispute. Nevertheless, the legislature was an important and influential body, and Wright realized that he would need its support again. Wright's efforts seemed to pay off. By March 10, he was confident enough to write to a British official that many of the "better sort of people" had begun to see that firmness is the best policy.

For months rumors circulated to the effect that Parliament would repeal the Stamp Act. In Parliament the debates became quite heated. The colonists had an outstanding spokesman in William Pitt, the former prime minister. A gifted speaker who commanded great respect in Parliament, Pitt stated that Britain had "no right to lay a tax upon the colonies." He insisted that the Stamp Act should "be repealed absolutely, totally and immediately." By now, even the most ardent supporters of the Stamp Act were beginning to see that the law had been a mistake. Designed to bring in additional tax money, it had

not done so. For England to force the aroused colonists to pay the tax would be foolhardy, for the effort would be terribly expensive and might even drive the colonists into outright rebellion. In England, many merchants who had lost busines because of the colonial boycotts favored repeal. Furthermore, George Grenville, the sponsor of the Stamp Act, had been ousted as prime minister before the act went into effect, and his successor was not eager to enforce an unpopular measure. For these various reasons, Parliament at last voted to repeal the Stamp Act on March 18, 1766. Parliament did not, however, give up its right to tax the colonies On the contrary, it merely gave up on the Stamp Act. On the same day that Parliament repealed the Stamp Act, it passed the Declaratory Act which stated that Parliament still had every right to legislate for the colonies "in all cases whatsoever."

When the Georgia legislature convened on July 16, 1766, Wright reminded the members that the Stamp Act had been repealed. He praised King George III for his regard for "the happiness and prosperity of his American subjects," and he congratulated the legislature for not passing any harmful resolutions during the crisis. Wright was also relieved that Georgia had endured the crisis without suffering any major injuries or damages. In this spirit of harmony, both houses agreed to send an address to the King, thanking him for the repeal of the Stamp Act and for his consideration for his American subjects.

Following the repeal, a number of moderates tried to promote harmony and end the discord that had disrupted the colony. The Reverend John Zubly, the respected Presbyterian minister in Savannah, delivered a sermon called "The Stamp Act Repealed." In that sermon, which was later printed and distributed, Zubly urged Georgians to be forgiving. He called on Georgians to give thanks to God, to King and to Parliament for the repeal of the Stamp Act.

A week later another moderate came forward. On July 2 an article signed by "Benevolus" appeared in the *Georgia Gazette*. This anonymous writer pleaded to Georgians of all factions to put aside their differences and be thankful that the Stamp Act was repealed. Benevolus' good intentions were only partly successful. In the next issue a week later, an unknown writer agreed with Benevolus. "Bear and Forebear" stated that, "Over-heated passions have occasioned much wrong on both sides." But the same issue of the *Georgia Gazette* included an essay by "Lover of Truth," which attacked Benevolus and blamed the radicals for the recent disturbances. These articles touched off a spirited debate in the pages of the *Georgia Gazette* which lasted for several weeks. When the writers stooped to personal name-calling, James Johnston, the printer of the newspaper, announced that he would accept no more essays on the subject. By then, August 6, the public had grown weary of the debate. For all practical purposes, the Stamp Act crisis in Georgia was now over.

Like most controversies, it ended with both sides claiming victory. Governor Wright, the most successful royal governor in this crisis, had managed to maintain royal authority and keep the stamps out of the hands of the radicals. Thanks largely to the merchants, whose quest for profits was greater than their devotion to principle, he was able to sell the stamps for clearing 60 ships from the port of Savannah. No other governor in a British mainland colony had fared as well. Moreover, he continued to be generally popular with the people of Georgia long after the controversy had ended. In fact, he served as governor for 22 years – the longest term in Georgia's history. His courageous leadership in this troubled time commanded the respect of both friend and foe alike and has earned him high praise from practically every historian who has studied this period.

The radicals, however, could also take pride in their accomplishments. They had forced the

Courtesy, Connecticut Historical Society

The Stamp-Act repealed, the 8th of February, 1766.

HARTFORD, April 11. 1766.——XII. o'Clock.

Juſt now came to Town, a Gentleman from New-Haven, who brot the following in Writing, which he received from an Expreſs, at New-Haven Yeſterday, who was on his Way from Philadelphia, to Boſton, carrying the News of the Repeal of the Stamp-Act.——

We ſincerely congratulate the Public on theſe agreeable Tidings.

Baltimore-Town, (Maryland) April 5, 1766.

GENTLEMEN,

CAPT. Leonard Brooks arrived Yeſterday at 3 o'Clock P. M. in Patuxet River, from Meſſ'rs R. and J. Days, eminent Merchants in London, trading to this Province, who wrote Mr. George Maxwell of the 8th of February, 1766.———We ſend you encloſed a Letter from Mr. Maxwel, which, as he is a Gentleman of Veracity and Character, may be credited—as follows,

Benedict, April 4, 1766.

Dear Sir,

" Capt. Brooks is arrived—he has brought no Papers with " him; but Meſſ'rs R. and J. Days, write me of the 8th of " February 1766.—We ſincerely congratulate you on the Repeal " of the Samp-Act, which Thanks be God is juſt now reſolved " here, by a great Majority in Parliament.

" I am, Dear Sir, Yours, &c.

GEORGE MAXWELL."

This Letter brought from Patuxet this Morning, juſt now come to Hand: On Receipt of it, our *Sons of Liberty* aſſembled, and ordered their Committee to ſend off an Expreſs, with this agreeable News to Philadelphia, to be from thence forwarded to your City; on which we ſincerely congratulate you, and every Well-wiſher to the Liberty and Property of America.

We are, with Reſpect,

Gentlemen, your Humble Servants,

Patrick Allyn,	*Robert Alexander,*
Robert Adair,	*John Moale,*
D. Chamier,	*William Smith,*
Thomas Chace,	*William Luce.*

New-Haven, 10th April, 1766———Half paſt 11 o'Clock, A. M.

The above is a Copy of what was received by an Expreſs from New-York, and immediately forwarded towards Hartford.

governor to resort to extraordinary measures to protect the stamps. They had frightened the British authorities, forcing Parnham to resign and Angus to flee to the country. They had rid the colony of William Knox, the colonial agent who had supported Grenville, and replaced him with an agent more to their liking. And they had prevented the sale of the stamps except for the ships. These were formidable achievements, particularly when one remembers how weak the radicals were when the crisis began.

In the short run, it would appear that the Stamp Act crisis accomplished nothing more than straining the relationship between the British officials and moderates on one hand and the more radical elements on the other. But historical events are often like acorns planted in the ground – their full significance is not apparent until years later. Long-range results, though hard to measure, are very important. As a result of the Stamp Act crisis, these groups were more hostile, more ready for violence and less willing to compromise when new disputes arose. The Stamp Act crisis was the first major disagreement between the colonists and the British government in which Georgia joined the other colonies. In doing so, the Georgia radicals began to develop organizations which would keep them in contact with the other colonies. Having gained valuable political experience in the Stamp Act crisis, the radical elements would be better prepared for future conflicts with the British government.

Perhaps the most important long-range result of the Stamp Act crisis was in the realm of ideas. In a sense, the controversy was an educational experience for both sides. Long-accepted traditions were questioned for the first time. The British learned that the American colonists would no longer accept the authority of Parliament in all areas. And the American colonists were beginning to question what rights they possessed within the British Empire. These important issues had not been raised until the Stamp Act was passed. Governor Wright realized that the thoughts of many Georgians had changed during this controversy. Thorough as always, he wrote that many Georgians have "strange ideas" about liberty, taxation and representation. Wright did not agree with these ideas, nor did he fully understand them, but he feared that the Americans would cherish these new ideas and never abandon them. Little did he realize how accurate his prophecy would be. Almost exactly 10 years later, Thomas Jefferson included those strange ideas about liberty, taxation and representation in his Declaration of Independence.

Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society

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Teacher's Guide

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The purpose of this guide is to help you make better use of the pamphlet, *The Stamp Act in Georgia 1765-1766.* Behavioral objectives will be suggested. Topics and time allocations will be listed. Teaching strategies and questions will be described. Finally, resources will be listed. The suggestions in this guide are not meant to be limiting and do not outline the only way the pamphlet can be taught. They are a guide and a beginning. If you know of better approaches or materials for the students you teach, by all means use them.

Behavioral Objectives

These objectives will be rather general so they may apply to many teachers in various situations. For your own purposes you may want to create more objectives to suit specific needs of your students.

1. Each student should be able to summarize positions of the opposing forces involved in the Stamp Act controversy.
2. Each student should be able to write a description of how these positions aided the schism that became a revolution.
3. Each student should be able to state two ways in which the controversy in Georgia was similar to the controversy in other colonies and two ways in which it was different.
4. Each student should be able to state in his or her own words how the Stamp Act controversy compares with at least one current situation and how it differs.
5. Each student should practice such skills as making inferences, drawing conclusions and justifying decisions, as evidenced by successful completion of the tasks and activities required during study of the unit.

Suggested Topics and Time Allocations

1. Background—The Great War for the Empire created a need for money. One class period (50-55 minutes)
2. The British decision—The Stamp Act. One class period
3. The colonial reaction. One class period
4. Georgia and the tax. One class period

Times are only tentative. Based on your goals and the abilities of your students, times can be shorter or longer. For example, if you have the students do all of the suggested activities read the text in class, more time will be spent. Don't be rigid. If you have the students' interest, spend more time on a topic. If the class is bored, move on rapidly.

Suggested Activities

1. The Great War for the Empire. Using the first two pages of the pamphlet and standard American history textbook coverage of the "French and Indian" wars, set the stage with a 15-minute lecture describing the competition between England and France for control of North America. If the class has not recently

studied these conflicts it would be well to show students how much land England took away from France all over the world as well as in America.

Following this overview lecture, the following four questions or problems can be used. Several alternatives are available regarding the presentation of these questions – general class discussion, small group discussion, individual study or some combination of these three.

A. Where does the United States government get the money it spends? What kinds of taxes do citizens pay? Try to name at least three.

B. Britain's national debt doubled from £70 million to £140 million during the Great War for the Empire. Some of this debt occurred in protecting American colonists from the French and Indians. If you had lived in England at that time, would you feel the colonists should help pay off this debt? Write a letter to a colonist explaining your feelings.

C. Using the same situation as in B, take the American view that the colonists should not be taxed to pay off this debt, and write a letter to an English citizen explaining your reasons.

D. The British government felt that the colonists should pay taxes because Englishmen had died protecting the colonies and English troops were still in America protecting the colonies. In World War II we helped protect Europe, and today we still have troops in Europe to protect it. Our national debt is constantly increasing–inflation is soaring–should we ask Europeans to pay taxes to support our troops which are protecting them? (You may want to make this a debate topic.) How do the two situations differ?

2. The British decision–The Stamp Act. Students should be asked to use the pamphlet, *The Stamp Act in Georgia 1765-1766*, and other resources such as encyclopedias or U. S. history texts to answer the following three questions. Since the questions will be difficult for many students you may want them to work in groups of four or five so they may help one another. After 35 minutes you can lead a class discussion of the answers so each group can benefit from the efforts of others.

A. What was George Grenville's reasons for creating new taxes for the colonies? List as many as you can.

B. What items were taxed by the Stamp Tax? How did it affect the ordinary citizen? (One of the documents available through the Georgia Department of Archives and History mentioned in the resources section of this guide is a replica of the first page of the Stamp Act; it lists some of the items taxed.)

C. Do you think the Stamp Tax was fair? Was it too costly to the colonists? From the British viewpoint was it justified? On what grounds do you make your judgement?

3. The colonial reaction. Have the students read about colonial reaction to the taxes in the pamphlet. The teacher should begin by setting the stage for the major issue–who had the right to tax the colonists? The points that should be emphasized are listed below.

While the colonists may not have wanted any taxes at all, their cry was "No taxation without

representation."

Since they did not select representatives to Parliament, some colonists felt that they should not be taxed by England. Thus, they should either be taxed only by colonial assemblies or they should be granted representatives to Parliament.

Yet, even members of the colonial assemblies were elected by only a minority of colonists (white, male property owners).

Role Play (20 minutes)

On the day prior to this lesson, you should select several students to play the following roles in a panel discussion regarding the problem, "Is the Stamp Tax Fair to the Colonists?"

English gentleman who is a supporter of Grenville

Colonist who is loyal to the crown

Colonist who is a member of the Sons of Liberty

Colonist who lives on the frontier and will have no use for stamped paper

Colonial lawyer who will have to pay a heavy tax

Moderator

Teacher Directed Discussion (20-25 minutes)

Ask students to recall or look up the forms of protest used by the colonists (petitions, boycotts, anti-tax pamphlets, terrorization of tax collectors, public demonstrations, Stamp Act Congress and the destruction of public and private property).

A. List the forms of protest on the board as students give them and add those that they fail to mention.

B. Ask students to give recent examples of protest.

C. Are these tactics ever justifiable? Is it all right for extremist groups to destroy property—whether they be K.K.K., Black Panthers or Sons of Liberty? Is it all right for lettuce pickers to urge boycotts, even if the grocer loses income? Such questions may generate a great deal of interest and discussion. If so, continue the discussion and carry it on the next day.

4. Georgia and the tax. The following questions should be given to the students prior to their reading the final section of the pamphlet so that the questions can guide their reading. These questions can then serve as the basis for a teacher-led discussion or possible debates. You should ask students to cite specific statements as evidence for most of these questions, since many of them are supportable by evidence and not merely by opinion.

A. List five ways in which Georgia was less likely than other colonies to defy England.

B. List some of Governor Wright's personal traits which made it less likely for Georgians to be as radical as other colonists.

C. Who won the Stamp Tax Battle–Governor Wright who sold a few stamps or the Sons of Liberty who kept the law from being fully enforced? Cite evidence which supports both sides of the question. (This could serve as a debate topic. It could also be used by students to improve their writing skills and organizing their presentation.)

D. The author of the pamphlet seems to conclude that Governor Wright was an outstanding leader and that Georgia citizens can be proud of his actions. Can you find statements by the author which indicate that this is his conclusion?

E. The Stamp Act was repealed, but did the colonists win the major battle over who had the right to tax them?

5. This would be a good place to introduce conflicting interpretation using some general works. Was the revolution a result of the war for empire or was it simply a matter of the tyranny of the English king? Was it a manifestation of social and economic interests by a few colonial merchants? (This would be especially good for above-average students).

Resources

Such a topic as the Stamp Act in Georgia, which is limited in scope, has few resources related directly to it. However, the following should be helpful to teachers and students.

One excellent set of resources is *Georgia Heritage: Documents of Georgia History 1730-1790*, issued by the Georgia Commission for the National Bicentennial Celebration, Suite 520, South Wing, 1776 Peachtree Street, N.W., Atlanta, Georgia 30309 and prepared by the Georgia Department of Archives and History. One set of these documents will be issued to each school library and regional library in the state. Additional copies may be purchased from the Bicentennial Commission at $5.00 per set. Perhaps at least one of these should be made into a transparency and then used to give students some training in inferring from documentary evidence. Specific documents of interest are

Proclamation of government protection of Indian Rights.

Commission of James Wright as Governor.

Page one of the Stamp Act.

Proclamation against Stamp Act riots by Governor Wright.

Broadside announcing the Repeal of the Stamp Act.

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